

Tips for Special Education Paraeducators and Inclusion Helpers



***Providing Support While
Facilitating Student Independence***

Department of Special Education
Harford County Public Schools
June 2011



Making a Difference



*An old man walked up a shore littered with thousands of starfish,
beached and dying after a storm.
A young man was picking them up and flinging them back into the ocean.
"Why do you bother?" the old man scoffed.
"You are not saving enough to make a difference."
The young man picked up another starfish and sent it spinning back to the water.
"Made a difference to that one," he said.*

Dear Paraeducators and Inclusion Helpers,

Thank you for your commitment to being a vital part of the special education team who supports and provides services to students with disabilities attending Harford County Public Schools.

This booklet was designed to be a resource guide to you. It was developed to help define your role and how to meet the needs of students with disabilities. It is a general overview of your roles and responsibilities, special education, characteristics of disabilities, instructional and behavioral strategies, and resources for paraeducators and inclusion helpers. Information specific to the students you work with, and further direction will come from the administrators and teachers in your building. Continued professional development will assist you in refining your skills and knowledge related to academic and behavior strategies specific to the students you are supporting.

Our goal is to assist students in becoming as independent as possible and to prepare them for a bright future! We value your work and desire to serve our students and thank you for your dedication and professionalism. Please let us know how we may support you in your endeavor to grow professionally and be a valuable member of our team!

Sincerely,
Department of Special Education Staff

"We are willing and ready to connect with other kids, and adults must quietly step into the background, camouflaging their help as a tiger who may hide in full view. It's the needed disguise of the adult who smoothes the way for friendship, then steps back in the shadows, observing the complicated dance of steps taking you to the feeling or confidence."

Student with Autism ~ Syracuse University

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"We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give."

Sir Winston Churchill

Professionalism

- Present yourself as a positive role model for students.
- Represent Harford County Public Schools in a positive manner.
- Be punctual and attend work regularly.
- Follow your schedule consistently.
- Share relevant information with supervising teacher to facilitate problem solving, program planning, and student progress.
- If you have questions, seek answers and/or input.
- Discuss a student's progress or educational program only with the teachers who are responsible for that student's instruction.
- Discuss confidential school and student issues only with appropriate school personnel.
- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Maintain confidentiality and refrain from talking about a student in the community. Discuss students with only school personnel who directly work with the student
- Understand and follow school policies and procedures.
- Maintain appropriate dress as advised by your administration. Be mindful of wearing safe shoes and jewelry to perform duties. (i.e. for lifting students, supporting in physical education class, working with students who may be distracted by large jewelry or attempt to pull)
- Communication with parents is the teacher's responsibility. Refer parent inquiries regarding student progress to the student's teacher.
- Maintain student dignity by being discreet about students' physical needs.
- Refrain from discussing information about students in front of students.
- Maintain a professional relationship with students at all times. (Refrain from texting, e-mailing, or using Facebook to communicate with students)
- Refrain from using a cell phone or personal use of the computer in the classroom and while working with students.
- Be flexible and willing to assist when and where needed.
- Seek opportunities for professional growth such as reading journal articles, attending available training sessions, joining Professional Learning Communities, and/or participating in staff development.
- Focus on what a student "CAN do", rather than what he/she cannot do.

Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers, Paraeducators, and Inclusion Helpers

I. Instruction

<i>Teacher's Role</i>	<i>Paraeducator's Role</i>	<i>Inclusion Helper's Role</i>
<p>*Determines appropriate objectives for groups and individual students.</p> <p>*Develops and implements student Individual Education Plans (IEP) goals, accommodations and modifications.</p> <p>*Plans weekly schedules, lessons, room arrangement, learning centers, and activities for the entire class, as well as modifications and accommodations for students with IEP's.</p> <p>*Teaches lessons to the entire class, small groups, and individual students.</p> <p>*Administers and scores assessments.</p> <p>*Determines the appropriate use of assistive technology to meet the needs of students.</p> <p>*Develops data collection tools and collects data on student progress.</p>	<p>*Follows schedule and implement plans designed by teacher.</p> <p>*Implements student IEP goals, accommodations and modifications as directed by the teacher.</p> <p>*Provides direct assistance to student(s) so that they can participate, as independently as possible, in the least restrictive environment.</p> <p>*May lead small groups and implements instructional strategies as directed by the teacher.</p> <p>*Administers assessments under the direction of the teacher.</p> <p>*Facilitates the use of assistive technology.</p> <p>*Collects data on student progress as designated by the teacher.</p>	<p>*Provides assistance to student(s) on completing follow-up or reinforcement activities.</p> <p>* Supports implementation of modifications and accommodations as directed by the teacher.</p> <p>*Supports and assistance to student(s) so that they can participate, as independently as possible, in the least restrictive environment.</p> <p>*Supports student(s) during instruction and implements instructional strategies as directed by the teacher</p> <p>*Supports students while taking assessments under the direction of the teacher.</p> <p>* Supports the use of assistive technology.</p> <p>*Collects data on student progress as designated by the teacher.</p>

"It's a fine thing to have ability, but the ability to discover ability in others is the true test."

Elbert Hubbard

II. Behavior and Social Support

<i>Teacher's Role</i>	<i>Paraeducator's Role</i>	<i>Inclusion Helper's Role</i>
<p>*Observes behavior, plans and implements behavior intervention plans and strategies for the entire class and for individual students.</p> <p>*Facilitates appropriate social interactions between students.</p> <p>*Develops data collection tools and collects data on student behavior.</p>	<p>*Implements behavior intervention plans (BIP) and strategies under teacher direction.</p> <p>*Facilitates appropriate social interactions between students.</p> <p>*Collects data on classroom behavior as designated by the teacher.</p>	<p>* Supports behavior intervention plans and strategies under the direction of the teacher.</p> <p>*Facilitates appropriate social interactions between students.</p> <p>*Collects data on student behavior as designated by the teacher.</p>

III. Communication

<i>Teacher's Role</i>	<i>Paraeducator's Role</i>	<i>Inclusion Helper's Role</i>
<p>*Communicates with administrators, related service providers, general educators, paraeducators, and inclusion helpers, and appropriate staff regarding student progress.</p> <p>*Communicates with parents regarding student progress and concerns.</p>	<p>*Communicates with case manager and teachers regarding student progress.</p> <p>*Refrains from communicating with the parent. Before sending home written correspondence - have teacher review.</p>	<p>*Communicates with case manager and teachers regarding student progress.</p> <p>* Refrains from communicating with the parent. Before sending home written correspondence - have teacher review.</p>

"The best part of my job is learning something new about my students every day. Working with students with special needs children certainly has unique challenges. However, the rewards in seeing even small steps in their progress are immeasurable. It is extremely gratifying to know you are helping to make a difference in a child's life."

Paraeducator
John Archer School

IV. Personal Care

<i>Teacher's Role</i>	<i>Paraeducator's Role</i>	<i>Inclusion Helper's Role</i>
*Provides assistance with personal care needs including, by not limited to, lifting, transferring, feeding, and toileting.	Provides assistance with personal care needs including, by not limited to, lifting, transferring, feeding, and toileting.	Provides assistance with personal care needs including, by not limited to, lifting, transferring, feeding, and toileting.

V. Clerical

<i>Teacher's Role</i>	<i>Paraeducator's Role</i>	<i>Inclusion Helper's Role</i>
*Develops, models, and/or provides detailed instruction on preparing instructional materials. *Develops an organization system to manage student work samples and materials.	*Prepares instructional materials based on a model and/or detailed instructions provided by a teacher. *Assists with organization of student work samples and materials, as directed by the teacher.	*Prepares instructional materials based on a model and/or detailed instructions provided by a teacher. *Assists with organization of student work samples and materials, as directed by the teacher.

These roles and responsibilities are intended only as examples of the various types of job duties to be performed. The omission of specific duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is a similar, related, or logical assignment to the position. Duties may be assigned by the building based principal. These duties may vary from school to school.

"Be aware of what others are doing, applaud their efforts, acknowledge their successes, and encourage them in their pursuits. When we all help one another, everybody wins. Remember, we are a team, we work as a team, and we succeed as a team!"

Inclusion Helper
Fountain Green Elementary

Working with Students with Health and Physical Needs

Health and Safety Practices

- Seek training from school nurse on Standard Precautions/Universal Precautions.
- Practice universal precautions at all times to protect yourself and others.
- Wear gloves when coming into contact with bodily fluids. (changing diapers, feeding, wiping noses, etc.)
- Use proper hand washing techniques to protect yourself and others, before and after assisting with feeding, when coming in contact with bodily fluids. Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Dispose of gloves properly and wash hands thoroughly.
- Seek input and training from the school nurse concerning the health procedures for specific students.
- Clean materials and items mouthed by students only with a safe cleaner provided by the HCPS custodial staff.
- Call for a custodian to clean blood, vomit, urine and bowel spills.
- Follow the proper disposal of diapers recommended by your school nurse and custodians.
- Place soiled clothes in a double lined plastic bag and seal tightly.
- Alert nurse of any skin breakdown or rash noted during diapering.

Self Care Strategies

- Always be discreet when assisting with the self care needs of students. Carry diapers and supplies to the bathroom in a bag.
- Provide supervision of self care skills as needed, yet allow for privacy.
- Discuss IEP goals related to self care skills with teacher and reinforce throughout the school day.
- Independence should be encouraged and taught while assisting a student with self care skills. Allow the student to do as much as possible while completing self care tasks. It will take longer in the beginning, but will pay off as the student becomes more independent!
- Occupational therapists may provide guidance on toileting, feeding and dressing strategies.
- Maintain toileting schedules as designated by the teacher and record toileting progress to adjust the schedule to enhance students' progress towards toilet training.
- Maintain confidentiality of student related to health issues and self care.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Benjamin Franklin

- Toileting
 - Diapering areas should be available with the following supplies:
 - HCPS approved disinfectant;
 - Plastic barrier (dental bibs);
 - Mat/cot;
 - Gloves;
 - Change of clothing;
 - Wipes as necessary (provided by the parent); and
 - Plastic bags for disposal and transport.
 - Gather all materials ahead of time and have within reach.
 - Change student with them standing when possible.
 - If a student is changed lying down, there must be a plastic, disposable barrier between the child, diaper area and changing table. The barrier must be thrown away after each change.
 - Vinyl gloves are used on both hands when changing diapers.
 - All diapers, barriers, gloves, paper towels, etc. must be disposed of in double, plastic bags.
 - Soiled/wet clothing must be double-bagged in plastic bags to be sent home.
- Personal Care - Training Strategies
 - Consult with teacher, OT, PT, and/or school nurse for tips specific to the student.
 - Be mindful of physical signs that the student needs to use the bathroom.
 - Use visuals to request going to the bathroom.
 - Establish bathroom routines.
 - Utilize picture schedule routines for toileting and hand washing.
 - Follow the toileting schedule
 - Record progress (time of day, wet or dry, went or did not go, duration of time sitting on the toilet, etc.).
 - Discuss "refinements to the toileting schedule with the teacher based on the data.
 - Provide positive reinforcement for all steps of the toileting process.
 - Refrain from negative reinforcement/consequences for accidents.
 - Allow for maximum independence while providing minimal prompting.

Note: There is no legal authority requiring the involvement of multiple staff members for the purpose of assisting student toileting needs. School personnel are encouraged to act in the best interest of the individual; mindful of student needs, provision of privacy, development of self-care and personal safety.

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Mobility

- Seek training from the Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapists, and/or Special Education Teacher concerning lifting and positioning for specific students.
- Encourage independence of students.
- Be aware of evacuation plan for students using walkers/crutches or wheelchairs.

To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world."

-Mahatma Gandhi

Medical Issues - Students with medical issues may have an individualized health care plan. Discuss the specifics of the plan with the special educator and school nurse prior to working with the student. The protocols for specific students may vary.

- **Seizures – General Guidelines** - The protocols for specific students may vary. Consult with the special educator and nurse prior to working with these students.
 - Discuss with the teacher and nurse the students who have a history of seizures.
 - Discuss with nurse and special educator the typical nature, length of time of seizures and protocol to follow for particular students (see Emergency Action Plan).
 - Stay calm
 - Take note of the time the seizure started
 - Clear area/Protect from injury
 - Do not leave student unattended
 - Do not try to restrict motor movements of the seizure
 - Do not place anything in student's mouth.
 - Call for the nurse if necessary
 - If student falls to the floor, position student on his side, when possible, placing something under their head
 - Observe and be prepared to describe the pattern of the seizure, i.e. what part of the body was affected, type of movement, length of seizure; incontinence
 - When the seizure is over, allow the student to rest when necessary
 - Document the nature and length of time of the seizure
 - Report to special educator and/or nurse as directed
- **Allergies** - The symptoms and protocols for specific students may vary. Consult with the special educator and nurse prior to working with the students.
 - **Allergic Reactions**
 - Become aware of symptoms of allergies such as respiratory problems, swelling of face, lips or tongue, rashes on the skin, hives, vomiting and report to the school nurse.
 - Become aware of procedures for students in need of an Epi-pen. The school nurse will provide instruction (follow emergency action plan).
 - **Food Allergies**
 - Become aware of the food allergies of students you are feeding or are assisting with feeding. This information may be obtained from the school nurse.
 - Become aware of symptoms of food allergies such as respiratory problems, swelling of face, lips or tongue, rashes on the skin, hives, vomiting and report to the school nurse immediately.
 - Remain with student; accompany them to the health suite.
 - **Latex Allergies**
 - Wear non-latex gloves for students with latex allergies.
 - Be aware that latex may be in the following: Gloves, band aids, balloons, rubber bands, koosh balls, paint, rubber/foam puzzles, glue, and erasers. Check with the school nurse for a complete list of materials not to expose to students with latex allergies.

Definitions, Characteristics and

Instructional Strategies for Specific Disabilities

Educational disabilities include: Autism, Deaf-blindness, Deafness, Developmental delay, Emotional Disturbance, Hearing Impairment, Intellectual Disabilities, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairment, Other health impairment, Specific learning disability, Speech or language impairment, Traumatic brain injury, or Visual impairment. This is a general list of characteristics and instructional strategies of the most common disabilities that may or may not apply to all students with each disability. Please seek input from the teachers you work with to discover additional information that will assist you in meeting the unique needs of our students.

Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)

Categorized as Other Health Impairment

ADHD is a neurobiological disorder. Typically, children with ADHD have developmentally inappropriate behavior, including hyperactivity, inattention, and impulsivity that occur in several settings such as home, school and extra-curricular activities.

General Characteristics May Include:

- Hyperactivity
- Distractibility
- Inattention
- Impulsivity
- Social skills deficit
- Difficulty Focusing
- Poor organization of materials and thoughts
- Fails to give attention to detail and makes careless mistakes
- Varied perception of time (difficult tasks may seem like they take a very long time, preferred tasks maintain their attention for longer periods of time)
- Difficulty following through with directions and completing assignments
- Difficulty with problem solving

Instructional Strategies:

- Minimize distractions
- Provide uncluttered workspace
- Provide structure and routine
- Provide organizational tools and strategies
- Provide visual and graphic organizers
- Break tasks into smaller segments
- Highlight important ideas
- Use color-coding for key vocabulary
- Use timers to provide reminders of time concepts related to task completion
- Modified instruction
- Set behavioral expectations
- Provide structured breaks between assignments
- Allow for movement opportunities
- Utilize active learning
- Provide fidget objects and wiggle cushions

Autism

A developmental disability that significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction.

General Characteristics May Include:

- Verbal and nonverbal communication deficit
- Narrow interests with stereotyped behaviors
- Resistance to environmental change and daily routines
- Engage in repetitive activities (repeating a phrase/story or performing same motor task over and over)
- Literal and concrete thinker
- Unusual responses to sensory experiences
- Varying levels of intelligence and ability
- Difficulty with social interaction skills
- Motor difficulties

Instructional Strategies:

- Obtain the student's attention before giving a direction or talking with the student.
- Provide structure, consistency and routine.
- Allow enough time for the student to respond.
- Reduce amount of talking to the student.
- Provide choices for students when possible.
- Use visual supports (objects, photos, picture, symbols, gestures, or sign language) to increase understanding.
- Prepare students for transitions and changes in schedule or routine (First, then chart, use of a picture schedule, visual timer).
- Avoid using idioms, words with double meanings and sarcasm.
- Allow the use of a "fidget" or sensory object when appropriate.

Asperger's Syndrome (Falls under the Umbrella of Autism)

A disorder with some of the same characteristics of Autism, however, there is no general delay in cognitive development. Most students are of average or above average intelligence, but may have poor coordination, severe and sustained impairment in social interaction, development of restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior, interests and activities.

General Characteristics May Include:

- Difficulty applying information and skills
- Very adept at memorizing facts
- Do not understand social cues and non-verbal communication
- Highly verbal
- Lack of understanding that behavior impacts how others think or feel
- Poor social skills
- Problem differentiating fact from fiction
- Easily stressed
- Easily distracted and inattentive
- Obsessive compulsive behaviors

Instructional Strategies:

- Respond to visuals (Graphic organizers, checklists)
- Identify environmental stressors and be proactive to relieve anxiety
- Redirect negative thoughts
- Provide choices
- Provide social skill training
- Encourage modeling of peers
- Provide structure and routine

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Impairment

Students have a wide range of hearing loss. The term deaf implies that a person has a very severe hearing loss and relies primarily on lip reading or sign language for communication.

General Characteristics May Include:

- Language and speech delay
- Different voice characteristics
- May misunderstand information presented
- Difficulty understanding concepts that are not concrete
- Takes things literally
- Learn some basic signs (aslpro.com)

Instructional Strategies:

- Use of visuals
- Gain the student's attention before speaking
- Face the student when talking
- Speak clearly and at a normal pace
- Be sure the student is seated close to the speaker
- Allow time for the student to respond

Developmental Delay

A student three through nine (in HCPS) assessed and evaluated as having a twenty-five percent or greater delay in adaptive, cognitive, development or atypical development or behavior, or a diagnosed physical or mental condition. Since the characteristics and instructional strategies for individual students will vary, consult the teacher for recommendations for each student.

"The game is supposed to be fun. If you have a bad day, don't worry about it. You can't expect to get a hit every game."

Yogi Berra

Emotional Disability (ED)

Characterized by one or more of the following: Displayed pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, consistent or chronic inappropriate type of behavior or feelings under normal conditions, inability to learn that cannot be adequately explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors, displayed tendency to develop physical symptoms, pains, or fears associated with personal or school problems, inability to build or maintain interpersonal relationships with peers and/or teachers.

General Characteristics May Include:

- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings
- Uncooperative
- Withdrawn
- Low self esteem
- Difficulty with social skills and interacting with peers and adults
- Resists authority
- Poor coping skills, social skills and self control
- Aggressive behavior
- Anxiety

Instructional Strategies:

- Set clear rules, boundaries and expectations and stick to them
- Learn what might trigger a student's behavior and work with the student to be proactive in or de-escalate the behaviors
- Avoid power struggles
- Use an even tone of voice and refrain from raising your voice
- Provide choices of two things you want them to do
- Encourage the use of self control strategies (deep breathing, counting backwards)
- Consistently follow the behavior plan or behavior strategies recommended by the teacher, behavior specialist and IEP team
- NEVER use physical restraint unless you have completed Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) training
- Be flexible when appropriate
- Refrain from pleading or bribing and "rehashing past behavior".

"I have seen children struggle with basic information for weeks on end when all of a sudden, something clicked. What joy to see a student count money, tell time or read a simple book without missing any words for the first time."

Special Education Paraeducator
Church Creek Elementary School

Intellectual Disability ID (Cognitive Disability)

A significant overall delay in thinking, communicating and performing daily life skills.

General Characteristics May Include:

- Require more time and repetition to learn things
- May have difficulties with fine and gross motor
- Delayed academic and social skills
- May have delayed speech and language
- Adult assistance or supervision for activities of daily living (toileting, dressing, feeding)

Instructional Strategies:

- Multi-sensory approach (sandpaper letters, gross motor activities, hear it and say it and write it)
- Use of visual supports (objects, photos, picture, symbols, gestures, or sign language) to increase understanding
- Scaffolding (Identify what they know and build on previously learned skills)
- Provide structure and establish routines
- Modeling (showing them how to complete a task, providing model of completed task)
- Allow extra time for response
- Break tasks/assignments into down into smaller segments
- Need assistance or supervision for activities of daily living
- Use redirection and frequent positive reinforcement
- Modified and/or alternative curriculum

Orthopedic Impairment

Physical (motor) difficulties in mobility, writing, and or sitting.

General Characteristics May Include:

- Limited movement and functioning of arms and/or legs
- Involuntary movements (cannot control)
- May need assistance with activities of daily living (toileting, dressing, feeding)

Instructional Strategies:

- Remove or accommodate barriers for student
- Make classroom accessible so student can access all areas of the classroom
- Allow students to be as independent as possible
- Speak to the person at eye level (sit down if they are in a wheelchair)
- Allow enough time for student to respond, complete activities

Ensure proper positioning for access and comfort prior to instruction

"It's not that he is not able to learn, he is just coloring outside of the lines".

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Physical (motor) difficulties in mobility, writing, and or sitting.

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- May need assistance with activities of daily living (toileting, dressing, feeding)

Instructional Strategies:

- Remove or accommodate barriers for student
- Make classroom accessible so student can access all areas of the classroom
- Allow students to be as independent as possible
- Speak to the person at eye level (sit down if they are in a wheelchair)
- Allow enough time for student to respond, complete activities
- Ensure proper positioning for access and comfort prior to instruction

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

A disorder in one or more basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself ability to listen, think, speak, read, spell, or do mathematical calculations.

General Characteristics May Include:

- Have difficulty in one or more academic area, yet may be strong in other areas
- Difficulty processing information either visually or through spoken language
- Average or above average intelligence
- Easily distracted and frustrated
- Inattention
- Social skills deficit

Instructional Strategies:

- Use the student's strengths to work on difficult areas.
- Chunking (Breaking assignments down into smaller, more manageable tasks)
- Allow extra time for response
- Graphic organizers
- Visual organizers
- Use of "catchy words" that help a student remember an instructional (Example: COPS = Capitalization, Overall Appearance, Punctuation, Spelling)
- Multi-sensory approach (sandpaper letters, gross motor activities, hear it and say it and write it)
- Scaffolding (Identify what they know and build on previously learned skills)
- Color coding
- Use of timers and providing reminders of remaining time to complete an assignment
- Modified instruction

Speech/Language Impairment

Difficulty in understanding or expressing language, stuttering or unusual voice characteristics.

General Characteristics May Include:

- Delay in language concepts (sentence length, vocabulary)
- Poor pragmatic (social language)
- Difficulty understanding when speaking

Instructional Strategies:

- Model good speech and language
- Allow students to communicate as independently as possible utilizing their mode(s) of communication (verbal, sign language, picture symbols, augmentative communication device/voice output device, computer)
- Ask student to repeat if you did not understand or express in a different way (show me, point to)
- Allow enough time for student to respond
- Use visual supports (objects, photos, picture, symbols, gestures, or sign language) to increase understanding

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

An injury to the brain that adversely affects a student's educational performance.

General Characteristics May Include:

- Impairment may be in one or more of the following areas: cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem solving, motor abilities, processing and speech
- May need assistance with activities of daily living (toileting, dressing, feeding)
- Anxiety of coping with the loss of skills prior to injury

Instructional Strategies:

- Use simple and concrete language, but maintain high expectations
- Repetition of skills
- Modeling
- Break tasks/assignments into down into smaller segments

***“Tell me and I'll forget;
Show me and I may remember;
Involve me and I'll understand.”***

Chinese Proverb

Visual Impairment

Impairment in vision which, even with correction, adversely affects a student's educational performance. Visual Impairment includes partial sight and blindness.

General Characteristics May Include:

- May tire easily visually
- Sensitivity to light
- May have difficulty finding materials
- Difficulty with mobility
- Poor depth perception

Instructional Strategies:

- Close proximity to teacher and instructional materials
- Enlarged print
- Multi sensory (hearing, touch)
- Assistive Tech devices (talking calculators, dome magnifier)
- Light boards
- Organized workspace
- Reduce glare
- Use pens or markers vs. pencil
- Slant boards
- Contrast of color/use of contrasting backgrounds

*"If students don't succeed at first, try again using different strategies
and always remember to have patience and understanding."*

Paraeducator
Fountain Green Elementary School

Accommodations and Modifications

Accommodations and modifications are types of adaptations that are made to the environment, curriculum, instruction, or assessment practices in order for students with disabilities to be successful learners. They allow them to participate actively with other students in the general education classroom and in school-wide activities. Specific accommodations and modifications are identified and approved for students by the IEP (Individual Education Plan) Team. The special education teacher will share the specific accommodations and modifications needed for each student to be successful. As a paraeducator or inclusion helper, you will assist in providing the appropriate accommodations and modifications in academic settings.

Accommodations vs. Modifications

Accommodations

- Changes **HOW** a student accesses or demonstrates learning
 - Setting
 - Small group
 - Seating in front of the room
 - Limited distractions
 - Study carrel
 - Presentation
 - Chunking –breaking up tasks/assignments into smaller pieces
 - Outline/highlight key points/concept
 - Scheduling
 - Scheduled Breaks
 - Use of timers
 - Visual schedule
 - Response Mode
 - Dictated response
 - Picture Symbols
 - Extended time for written response

Examples of Accommodations:

- ✓ test taken orally
- ✓ large print textbooks
- ✓ additional time to take test
- ✓ locker with an adapted lock
- ✓ weekly home-school communication tool, such as a notebook or daily log book
- ✓ peer support for note taking
- ✓ lab sheets with highlighted instructions
- ✓ graph paper to assist in organizing and lining up math problems
- ✓ tape record lectures
- ✓ use of a computer for writing

Modifications

- Changes **WHAT** a student is expected to learn
 - Requiring a student to learn less material or content
 - Revising assignments to reduce expectations
 - Reducing or changing test content

Examples of Modifications:

- ✓ outline in place of essay for major project
- ✓ picture/ symbols choices on tests
- ✓ alternative books or materials on the same theme or topic
- ✓ spelling support from a computerized spell check program
- ✓ word bank of choices for answers to test questions
- ✓ use of a calculator on a math test
- ✓ film or video supplements in place of text
- ✓ questions re-worded using simpler language
- ✓ projects substituted for written reports
- ✓ important words and phrases highlighted
- ✓







"Everyone makes decisions in their life to do something or change something. I made the decision to change something, but the thing that changed was me."

Inclusion Helper
Churchville Elementary

"In learning you will teach, and in teaching you will learn."

Phil Collins

Student Communication

Types of Communication	Strategies	Materials and Resources
Verbal <i>*This student communicates through oral language independently.</i>	*Provide simple, clear, directions.	
Verbal with Prompting <i>*This student communicates in simple words or short phrases. The child will need prompts to generate language.</i>	*Use visuals, gestures, or sign language. *Provide simple and concise language.	*T-Cube – HCPS Special Education Sharepoint site *See your Speech and language for resources to enhance student learning
Sign Language <i>*This student may use sign language expressively and/or receptively to assist with comprehension.</i>	*Consult with the special educator, speech therapist or interpreter for direction to assist student. *Sign language is sometimes used as a strategy to increase receptive language (understanding).	 www.aslpro.com <i>This website provides video tutorials on how to create specific signs.</i>
PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) <i>*This student may have minimal or no verbal language. He/she communicates through pictures expressively and/or receptively to assist with comprehension.</i>	*Once the student provides symbol, read the symbol to indicate your understanding, and then respond to the request; encourage, but do not require verbal participation in the exchange.	Boardmaker, Writing with Symbols 2000 PECs manual/video tape/training   
Augmentative Communication (Voice Output Devices) <i>*This student has limited, unintelligible, or no verbal communication. The student utilizes the voice output devices for expressive communication.</i>	*Model use of the device in the beginning. *Provide opportunities for the students to use the device for responding. *Make sure the device is available to the student at all appropriate times.	 

Keys to Effective Communication

- Maintain close proximity and use a low volume when communicating with students.
- Communicate at eye level when possible.
- Provide clear and simply stated directions of what you expect the child to do instead of telling them what you don't want them to do.
- Repeat back to the student what you think they are saying to clarify what the student means.
- Some children may require a model, picture, or sign of the action paired with the verbal direction.
- Use age appropriate language when speaking with students. (Refrain from using "baby talk"). Encourage students to use age appropriate language.
- Allow students time to communicate independently using their mode(s) of communication.
- Allow for extra processing and response time.
- Tell them what you want them to do instead of what you don't want them to do.

Instead of saying:	Say/Model	Reinforce
"No yelling!"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Use a calm voice."• "Use an inside voice."• Talk softly• Provide visual of "quiet"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Speak in a low voice while saying... Now I can listen, you are using a quiet voice."• "Nice job using your inside voice."
"Don't run!"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "We walk in the hallway."• "Use walking feet."• "Walk please."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "I like the way you're walking."• "Thanks for walking!"
"Stop calling out!"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Raise your hand."• "When you raise your hand, the teacher will answer your question."• Provide visual of hand raised	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Thank you for raising your hand."• "I like the way you raised your hand to share your ideas."

"When people talk, listen completely."

Ernest Hemingway

Positive Behavioral Strategies and Supports

- Behavior is a means of communication. Consider what the student is trying to tell you with the behavior. Is she hungry? Is he frustrated? Is he trying to get attention? Is she trying to escape the demand? Is he sick? Does she want a preferred object?
- Behind most behaviors exists a skill deficit.
 - Language and social difficulties
 - Sensory processing difficulties
 - Academic and writing skill deficits
 - Difficulties managing stress and anxiety
 - Attention difficulties
 - Difficulties handling transition and change
 - Difficulties with self esteem
 - Organizational difficulties
- Teach the skill deficit to help reduce the inappropriate behavior
- Provide structure, routine and consistency
- Implement classroom and individual student behavior plans created by the teacher and/or IEP team consistently.
- Remind students of expectations prior to the transitions of an activity.
- Notify student of any schedule changes in advanced.
- Be cognizant of triggers/antecedents (what happens prior to the behavior occurring) that may lead to inappropriate behavior.
- Communicate with the teacher regarding student behaviors within a reasonable time frame.
- Encourage, expect and reinforce age appropriate behavior, even with students with lower cognitive abilities.
- Be proactive when assisting with behavior management. Provide structure and routine in an environment that is conducive to learning.

"If a child can learn one new thing that they couldn't do before, I've helped to make a difference."

Inclusion Helper
North Harford Elementary School

- When communicating with students, state directions and expectations in a simple, explicit, and positive manner. Tell the students what they are supposed to do. For instance, instead of saying “Don’t run”, say “Please walk in the halls”.
- Offer students choices to avoid a power struggle. Rather than say “Don’t tap your pencil”, state “Would you rather put your pencil in your pencil case or in your desk.”
- Provide and encourage association with appropriate peer role models.
- Avoid overreacting to inappropriate behavior. Some students may be reinforced by negative attention which may increase inappropriate behaviors.
- When possible, ignore attention seeking behaviors that are not disruptive to the classroom.
- Acknowledge student’s feeling when upset (“I understand you are upset”)
- Diffuse stressful situations for students through redirection and distraction when appropriate.
- Provide positive reinforcement. Avoid focusing on punitive consequences or loss of privileges.
- When offering positive reinforcement, state what you like about the behavior. Rather than just saying say “good job”, state “I like the way you raised your hand to participate.”
- Avoid discussing incidents of behavior that occurred in the past.
- Physical intervention is used as a last resort. This intervention is utilized only by those trained in Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI). Must complete documentation if physical intervention is used.
- Avoid personalizing student behavior and language.
- Focus on the positive!

“A good motto to live and work by, “A Clean Slate Every Day”. No matter what has happened the day before, greeting each day with this motto makes life at school a little easier!”

North Harford Middle
Paraeducator

Strategies for Facilitating Student Independence

- Increasing learner independence is the instructional goal for every student! Encourage students to be independent rather than dependent.
- Encourage and allow students to make choices and decisions.
- Encourage students to complete activity as independently as possible prior to offering support.
- Allow student work to be authentic, rather than completed by the paraprofessional or inclusion helper.
- Allow students to make mistakes and experience natural consequences, unless there is a safety issue.
- When appropriate, sit or stand at a distance from the student who requires additional adult support.

Break larger tasks into smaller steps to allow student to independently perform parts of task/assignment independently or with minimal prompting.

Functional Example	In the cafeteria, a student is unable to type the full pin number. Encourage the student to enter the first or last number of the pin. Gradually, increase number of digits entered by student.
Academic Example	A student is expected to write a paragraph. This task could be divided into smaller sections such as formulating ideas, creating a topic sentence, developing supporting sentences, and formulating a conclusion. The student may only complete one or two of these tasks during the class time.

Utilize peer support when possible.

Functional Example	<p>A student is unable to tie his/her shoe. Rather than the paraeducator or inclusion helper tying the student's shoe, a peer could do this instead.</p> <p>Students may benefit from having a packing up/locker buddy at the end of the day rather than depending on adult support for this task.</p>
Academic Example	<p>During math class, pairs of students work on an activity sheet together. Instead of the paraeducator or inclusion helper scribing for a student with a fine motor disability, the student's partner can write for her/him.</p> <p>A student with a reading disability participates in a play during Integrated Language Arts. This student could be paired with a peer to help him/her learn the lines.</p>

Utilizing the Prompt Hierarchy to Facilitate Student Independence

- A prompt hierarchy refers to different levels of support provided to assist a student who is learning or demonstrating a task.
- This is a suggested prompt hierarchy from the Alt-MSA Handbook beginning with least intrusive and moving through most intrusive. The goal is to begin with the least intrusive prompts. The most intrusive prompts should be used minimally and gradually faded as appropriate under the direction of the teacher.
- When a student is learning a new skill, more prompting is needed, as the student masters the skill, less prompting is needed. Our goal is to fade prompting when appropriate, and promote student independence.
- Some students may have individualized prompt hierarchies. For example, you would not utilize gesture prompts for a student who is blind or has a severe vision disability.
- Seek direction from the teacher concerning the appropriate prompts to be used with students.
- It is important to provide sufficient wait time between prompts. Students may need wait time to respond to a direction.

Definitions Instructional Prompts

VERBAL PROMPTS: May be direct or indirect

DIRECT VERBAL PROMPT: Describe in words exactly what the student must do (e.g., “Write the letter ‘A’ now.”, “Add both numbers.”, “Turn on the switch.”).

INDIRECT VERBAL PROMPT: Provide a verbal reminder or verbally coax the student without stating the specific behavior (e.g., “What’s next?”, “Now what do you do?”, “Sound out the word slowly.”).

GESTURE PROMPT: Use hand or body motions to draw attention to an item associated with the objective (e.g., point to addition sign on a worksheet to prompt the student to add the numbers, tap a word on an index card to prompt the student to say the next word in the sentence).

MODEL PROMPT: Demonstrate part or all of a behavior to prompt an imitative response (e.g. write the letter “P” to show the student how to write the letter and then have the student write the letter).

PARTIAL PHYSICAL PROMPT: Provide physical guidance at the elbow or shoulder.

FULL PHYSICAL PROMPT: Provide hand over hand guidance.

Derived from the MSDE Alt MSA 2011 Handbook

Inclusion Solutions

Research supports that students with disabilities learn best with their typical peers in the general classroom with accommodations and modifications. Our goal, in alignment with federal and state law, is for students to be included in the general education classroom to the fullest extent possible.

Tips for Supporting Students in the General Education Classroom

- Implement the appropriate accommodations, modifications, and lesson plans provided by the special education teacher for specific students.
- Become familiar with the content of the unit/course. Ask the teacher for clarification about the material, when needed.
- Provide students with opportunities to ask questions and respond utilizing their mode(s) of communication (verbal, sign language, picture symbols, and augmentative communication/voice output device).
- Implement the classroom and/or individual behavior plan when the student is in the general education setting.
- Provide feedback and data to the teachers related to academic progress, work habits and behavior.
- Encourage students to become as independent as possible when following classroom routines.
- Avoid hovering over the student you are supporting. Facilitate student independence by varying the amount of support, monitoring, and prompting based on the need and independence level of the student.
- Assist with other students who need help, on occasion, not singling out the students who receive special education services.
- Be mindful of the volume of your voice in the general education classroom so as you provide direction; it does not distract other students. Limit talking to student while teacher is talking.
- Communicate with teachers about a plan to remove the student from the general education classroom if he is distracting students or needs a break. Discuss ahead of time with the teacher the expectations if a student needs to be removed from the classroom. Where should we go? What alternate activity should the student engage in? How long the student should be removed from the classroom? What are the criteria for the student to return to the classroom? Who do I call for help?
- Encourage students to interact with peers and develop peer relationships.
 - When working with students with limited cognition, social skills or verbal ability, get to know the interests of your student and classmates to share common interests with each other.
 - Select appropriate peer role models to work with or assist a student with a task, when appropriate.

Suggested Questions about Your Job Responsibilities

- Who are the students I will be supporting?
- What are the schedules of students I am supporting?
- What is my schedule?
- Are there student medical issues that I need to know prior to working with individual students?
- What are the school wide and classroom behavior systems?
- Does the student have Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)? If so, what are the target behaviors, rewards and consequences? Is there a crisis plan? What is my role if a student is in crisis?
- What are the safety considerations for individual students?
- How does the student communicate? What strategies are effective in communicating with the student?
- May I have a copy of the snapshot IEP (summary of Individual Education Plan: goals, objectives, accommodations and modifications)?
- How will we communicate about instructional plans for the students I support?
- How will I collect data and communicate about student progress?
- When will we meet to discuss student successes and concerns?
- What strategies and techniques are effective when working with particular students?
- What level of prompting does a student need to complete assignments?
- What can I do to help facilitate student independence?
- What can I do to assist with facilitating peer relationships?
- What level of supervision/support does the student need for the activity?
- Where are school supplies and how are they obtained?

Common Terms and Definitions

Adapted Physical Education (APE) – A related service for children who exhibit delays in motor development in addition to or in place of physical education including modifications of activities so students may participate more fully in physical education class.

Assistive Technology (AT) – Any item, piece of equipment, or product, which is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of students with disabilities.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) – A plan including target behaviors, behavioral strategies, positive reinforcement, and consequences for student behaviors. The plan is designed to teach students to demonstrate appropriate behavior and social skills.

Extended School Year Services (ESY) – Special education and related services during the summer. The purpose of ESY is to prevent a child with a disability from losing previously learned skills. The IEP team approves ESY goals for the student to work on. Not all students receiving special education services receive ESY.

Fine Motor – Motor skills related to the small muscle groups such as handwriting, using both hands to complete tasks, and buttoning.

Gross Motor – Motor skills related to the large muscle groups such as walking, sitting, and jumping.

Individual Education Program (IEP) – An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the educational program that has been designed to meet that child's unique needs. Each child who receives special education and related services has an IEP. The IEP is developed by teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when age appropriate). It includes educational goals and objectives, modifications and accommodations, documents progress and defines the services and placement of the student.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) – The educational placement that is close as possible to the general education environment that permits a child to receive the most educational benefit while participating in a regular educational environment to the maximum extent appropriate.

Occupational Therapist (OT) – Works with students to improve fine motor skills and meaningful activities of daily life such as self-care skills, education, recreation, or work.

Physical Therapist (PT) – Works with students to improve gross motor skills (large muscle groups) and mobility.

Special Education – Specialized instruction to fit the unique learning strengths and needs of students with disabilities. A major goal of special education is to teach the skills and knowledge the child needs to be as independent as possible. Special education programs focus on academics and include therapies and related services.

Speech and Language Therapist – Provides therapy to help a student develop or improve articulation (pronunciation), communication skills, pragmatics (social skills) and oral-motor skills.

*“Know the person, not the disability, in fact look past the disability and you will see a person, a person who has the same thoughts and feelings as anyone else.”
..... Author Unknown*

Special Education Acronyms

ADHD - Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder

ASD - Autism Spectrum Disorders

AT - Assistive Technology

APE - Adaptive Physical Education

ASL - American Sign Language

BIP - Behavior Intervention Plan

CBI - Community Based Instruction

CP - Cerebral Palsy

ED - Emotional Disability

ESL - English as a Second Language

ESY - Extended School Year

FBA - Functional Behavior Assessment

IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

LRE - Least Restrictive Environment

NCLB - No Child Left Behind Act

OT - Occupational Therapy

PECS - Picture Exchange Communication System

PDD - Pervasive Developmental Disorder

PT - Physical Therapy

RT I - Response to Interventions

SLP - Speech and Language Pathologist

SLD - Specific Learning Disability

SC - State Curriculum

"Each child you work with will teach you an important life lesson, so be ready for those teachable moments!"

Paraeducator
Homestead/Wakefield Elementary

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